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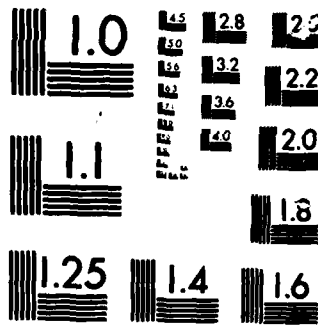
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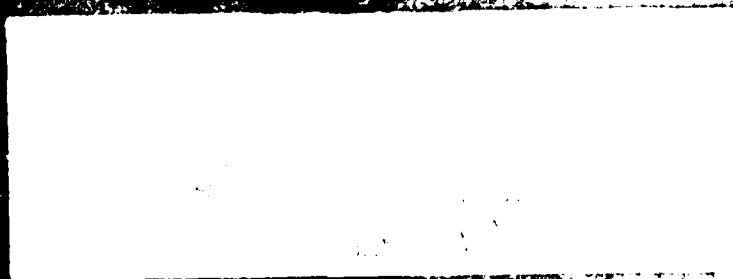
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MILITARY INSTALLATIONS AND LOCAL NEWS:  
EFFECTS ON MILITARY NEWS COVERAGE

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8 April, 1986



Approved for public release, distribution unlimited

A thesis submitted to the University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, Journalism.

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20. ger articles than did the nonmilitary town newspaper. Favorability of military news was slightly negative overall, and did not differ significantly among the three towns.

*Keywords: public relations; threats; public opinion.*

MILITARY INSTALLATIONS AND LOCAL NEWS:  
EFFECTS ON MILITARY NEWS COVERAGE

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MILITARY INSTALLATIONS AND LOCAL NEWS:  
EFFECTS ON MILITARY NEWS COVERAGE

by

STEPHANIE L. HOEHNE, B.A., M.P.A.

THESIS

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This study compares the treatment of the military in newspapers within two towns housing military installations and a third town with no military affiliation. The intent was to discover a baseline of public opinion, as reflected in the local newspapers, toward the military, and to determine if that baseline of public opinion differed between those towns with close as opposed to distant contact with the military.

The inspiration for this study was born of two significant events in the author's life. The first, a close affiliation with the U.S. military generated a growing realization that membership in the armed forces is hardly fashionable. The news that one is a member of the military is generally greeted with as much enthusiasm as the announcement that one has forgotten to brush one's teeth. The recipient of this information pauses, says "Oh?" brightly, maintains a fixed smile and gently shifts his weight to the other foot to facilitate a fast exit.

The second event was the pursuit of a journalism degree at the University of Texas, forcing constant exposure to both journalists and mass communication theories. This led to the insight that journalists influence the news, both in the selection of information to be transmitted (gatekeeping) and in

how it is presented to their audience. Whether journalists shape public opinion or merely reflect opinion, it becomes obvious that the handling of military news and the public's reactions to the military are inexorably linked.

In light of potentially uneasy public reactions, the U.S. military recognizes that it cannot remain an effective fighting force in the face of expanding mission demands and diminishing budget proposals without the support of the American public. "War cannot be fought and won without public understanding and support any more than it can be waged without bullets."<sup>1</sup> News media remain primary keys to how the competence and activities of the American military are perceived.

Part of the discomfort generated by the military is attributable to the nature of its goals. Members of the military are professionally trained and functionally specialized in the institutional application of violence. Military leaders are aware of an ambivalent attitude toward the military on the part of the public and of the need to cultivate good public relations. The news media, especially newspaper, become a primary vehicle for this public relations effort. The military must consider how it is faring at the hands of the news media and what avenues it should pursue to improve both its relationship and image with journalists.

Another facet of the military generating potential public concern is the drain on the American taxpayer in terms of money

and manpower to support the military. The taxpayer faces a peacetime draft registration for eligible males and increasing taxes to keep pace with an expanding military, yet he has little direct voice in how the military is used or run.

Policy decisions determine which wars should be fought and are a civil responsibility best left to the politicians. Strategy, the military domain, involves the execution of warplans with the manpower and logistics made available by civilians. In a status of war or peace, the relative responsibilities of the two domains remain stable and tensions about the military are reduced.

In a world situation in which there is neither war nor peace, but a continuous state of anxiety and preparation for war, these distinctions become blurred. Civilian considerations of economics and social welfare intrude on military strategy planning. The civilian population continually is asked to support a military at almost wartime strength in the name of preparedness. The news media's role in providing accurate information both for and about these entities becomes crucial.

Despite this dependence, the relationship between the news media and the military has ranged from strained to openly hostile since the Vietnam War. Tensions culminated in the deliberate omission of the news media from the rescue mission in Grenada in 1983. The news media were not informed of the deployment, nor were they allowed on the island for several days following the

start of the mission.<sup>2</sup>

While the factors which led to this decision are not the topic for this study, they emphasize a crucial point. The military remains a strong presence in both American and world affairs. Its funding, manpower and ability to accomplish its mission depends on the support of the American people. The public's primary source of information about the military are the news media; hence it is essential for the military to understand how the news media are influenced in their handling of military news.

This study concerns the relationship between the presence or absence of a military installation in a town and the amount and favorableness of military news contained in the local newspapers. A military installation exerts a sizeable impact on the community supporting it, both in terms of economic contributions and the integration of the military members into the community housing and schools. As social and institutional forces are recognized to influence the production of news, it is possible that the influence exerted by the presence of a military installation will exert a measurable and significant difference in the treatment of military news when compared to a similar town with no military installation nearby.

It is hoped that information gleaned concerning the differences in news treatment between "military" and "nonmilitary" towns will be useful to both journalists and the

public affairs officers whose job it is to keep the relationship between the military and the journalists stable.



## CHAPTER II

### THEORY

#### Review of Literature:

##### A. Influences on Media Content:

No credible newspaper will admit to bias in its news reporting; however, a lack of deliberate bias does not mean that the news necessarily accurately reflects reality. Reality is defined by Fishman as that which a society knows about itself.<sup>1</sup> Reality can also be defined as that which happens, whether we know about it or understand it. Using Fishman's definition, reality is distorted first in the gatekeeping function of news editors and reporters. They decide what information to report and what to ignore. Reality is distorted again by how an event is presented by the media. The medium itself affects the representation of the event, and the audience's subsequent perceptions. This was first identified by Lippmann<sup>2</sup> as the media's "pseudoenvironment," to which the audience reacts.

Lang and Lang,<sup>3</sup> in their comparison of television coverage of the 1951 MacArthur Day parade with the impressions of actual observers, found that people who watched the event on television considered it more exciting than those who saw the parade in person. Conversely, newspaper accounts, limited by space constraints and lacking the audio-visual appeal of television,

are more likely to distort reality through omission of information. Borman<sup>4</sup> found many omissions of relevant information in articles published on science topics; these omissions were directly related to article length.

The media cannot reflect reality accurately. There is too much information, too little time and too little space to do more than capture a flavor of the world's daily events. Decisions concerning what information is processed into news has been called the gatekeeping function of news editors and reporters. What influences these decisions, and subsequent media content, is the subject of numerous communication theories.

One such theoretical approach states that content results from social and institutional forces working on it. As outlined by Gans,<sup>5</sup> news is a product of the power relationships between various institutions and social forces and the journalists themselves. This approach emphasizes the factors external to the journalist, such as economic forces, culture and the audience. It also includes the market approach, wherein journalists give the audience what they need or what they want.<sup>6</sup>

Social and institutional forces working on the media may take many forms. Ease of acquiring information can impact on its representation in the news. Sachsman<sup>7</sup> found that many reporters and editors rely on press releases for information about the environment because of their own limited knowledge on the subject. Singletary<sup>8</sup> found that nearly 20 percent of all press

releases are used verbatim. Bethell<sup>9</sup> found that the ordinary front page of a newspaper contains few items that resulted from journalistic initiative alone. A large part of news is published because someone with a vested interest brought it to the newspaper's attention. Even so-called investigative reporting often consists of deciding what overtures from new sources to accept.

One factor affecting the ease of acquiring information is proximity. Identified as one of the basic news values in most journalism textbooks, proximity refers to the closeness of an event to the reporter and/or the audience. Proximity can be considered physical or conceptual. Physical proximity concerns the geographical closeness of an event to the journalist or audience. Conceptual proximity includes the amount of identification the audience has with the event, regardless of its physical closeness.

Luttbeg,<sup>10</sup> in studying the effects of geographical proximity on news, compared the location of a story to whether it was chosen by a newspaper for publication. He found no bias for stories closer to home; however, local stories receiving national attention were coded as national stories, potentially skewing the results.

Rosenthal,<sup>11</sup> in testing both geographical and conceptual proximity, found them to be an important variable in determining the kind of story written about an event. In studying press

roles in the spread of public opinion, Rosenthal concentrated on localized civil disorder. She found that the theme of articles written about the unrest were more affected by conceptual proximity than geographical space. Papers circulating among blacks and lower-to middle-class communities stressed preparedness, while papers circulating among white and middle-to upper-class communities within the same geographical area stressed problem solving. This may be an indication of a newspaper's response to its perceived audience's needs.

Manheim<sup>12</sup> concluded that rural editors devote twice as much newspaper space to congressional campaigns as do editors in urban areas. The rural editors say that proximity is a more important determinant of newsworthiness. This suggests that rural audiences have a more localized interest in news than do their urban counterparts.

The effects of economic factors on news has also been a topic of many studies. Prisuta<sup>13</sup> discovered no relationship between economic prosperity variables and the amount of news and public affairs information in broadcasting. Becker, Ream and Russial<sup>14</sup> found no support for their hypothesis that community size, market growth and retail stores influence newspaper performance. Economic factors, however, can impact on the news media from many directions, including the relative prosperity of the audience, newspaper ownership, advertising and circulation.

Tankard and Pierce<sup>15</sup> demonstrated an advertiser effect in

influencing magazine editorial policies toward alcohol. Janus<sup>16</sup> has also identified the increasing involvement of advertisers in media production.

Special interest groups and public relations departments of institutions exert continual pressure on the media to affect their representation in the news. The effectiveness of all this activity has not been fully studied. Albritton and Manheim<sup>17</sup> demonstrated that a public relations campaign by Rhodesia was effective in improving the portrayal of Rhodesia in the U.S. press. Stocking,<sup>18</sup> in studying the effects of public relations efforts on the media visibility of medical schools, suggested that public relations activities may have no effect on media visibility independent of the publicized organization's inherent newsworthiness. Dunwoody,<sup>19</sup> however, in examining the behavior of national news reporters at a science convention, found that public relations efforts were highly influential in determining who and what received national news coverage. Stempel and Culbertson<sup>20</sup> suggest that prominence and dominance of a source interacts with public relations efforts to determine newsworthiness.

There is substantial data documenting audience impact on the media's presentation of the news. Kariel and Rosenvall<sup>21</sup> showed that newspapers, given access to the same news sources, select news according to the reader's affinities. Consideration of the audience affects both the language of the media as found

by Namenwirth and Bibbie,<sup>22</sup> and the definition of news as studied by Cherry.<sup>23</sup> Schiller<sup>24</sup> found that the paying audience and advertisers become the arbiters of what types of information become news.

#### B. Community and Newspaper Relationships:

Newspapers essentially reflect the communities they serve. Their size, nature, scope and content are determined by characteristics of their audience, the community.<sup>25</sup> For example, Whiting<sup>26</sup> found that the Pearson r correlation between community size and newspaper circulation in Iowa was .84. Community size also affects whether a newspaper publishes daily or weekly, which, in turn, affects the type and level of services the newspaper renders to its audience.<sup>27</sup> As the community affects the newspaper, so does the nature of the newspaper affect its usage by the community.

Stamm and Fortini-Campbell,<sup>28</sup> in studying community usage of the local newspaper, found that identification with a community ranged from simple awareness of its activities to active involvement in community affairs. The level of involvement was positively correlated with increased newspaper use as a source of information about the community. Nwankwo<sup>29</sup> studied the use of community versus metropolitan media and found that metropolitan media were considered more accurate and creditable; however, the community media were perceived as providing more detailed information.

The use a community makes of its local paper depends, in part, on the size and structure of the community. As societies become more complex and diverse, there is a growing expectation that the information agencies, like the news media, will deliver the needed information and interpretations through the use of experts and news analysis.<sup>30</sup> In small communities with weekly newspapers, the emphasis is on news about existing institutions and the concensus aspect of local affairs. A larger, more complex community tends to have a daily newspaper, which reports on a broader range of issues. The controversial aspect of public issues is emphasized, in an effort to balance pressures from competing sources of information.<sup>31</sup>

Social conflict is a principal ingredient of much newspaper content, as conflict is a central component of community life.<sup>32</sup> Newspapers are often charged with either "sensationalizing" the conflict or of "covering it up."<sup>33</sup> Journalists answer the first accusation by emphasizing the importance of bringing things out into the open in the democratic process. The second accusation is called a normal part of the gatekeeping function, wherein editorial judgment is a prerogative.

Although conflict comprises much of a newspaper's content, few decisions generate as much editorial concern as how that conflict will be reported. Janowitz<sup>34</sup> found a Chicago community press that put sharp limits on the reporting of controversy,

although these limits were not readily explained by the format, nature or subject matter of the paper. Conflict content in community papers is perceived as a potential threat to community structure and values.<sup>35</sup> Kears<sup>36</sup> identified ritualistic reporting of conflict through the use of press releases and traditional news sources in an attempt to lessen its disruptive effect on the community.

Apart from reporting conflict, newspapers play a key role in both reporting and influencing the social forces within a community. The ability of newspapers to focus attention on specific issues has been identified by McCombs and Shaw<sup>37</sup> as agenda setting. They found that the ranking of topics in newspapers according to coverage and display, correlates positively with the audience's ranking of the importance of those topics.

The effect of this agenda setting function can be profound. Breed<sup>38</sup> found that American newspapers tend to omit economic news and information that is adverse to the commercial sector.

Agenda setting can be considered a derivative of the gatekeeping function of news editors and reporters. Whether journalists deliberately create the public's agenda or merely accurately reflect the public's concerns is not clear. The community does exert influence on the gatekeepers, affecting both the content and the style of the news.



In a case study, Stark<sup>39</sup> found that publishers frequently stated their preference for news coverage, both in institutions covered and political views. Breed<sup>40</sup> found that newspapers reflect, not the society itself, but the conditions of the system, including the power conditions and alignments. This is reflected in the news not covered as well as the news that is published. The power conditions impact on the publishers as well as the journalists, generating some influence on newspaper policy.

The audience's perceptions of a given institution are largely derived from the information received through the news media. The newspapers strike a delicate balance in leading and reflecting public opinion while performing the services expected of them.

Newspapers are instruments for gaining the public attention and a forum for public views. They are viewed as a resource by the different segments of the community seeking to gain or maintain a particular position of social influence and political power. These segments include elected officials, government agencies, the business community, churches and citizens' groups. If conflict develops among these segments, the newspaper may affect the conflict by reporting it and may be affected by its own position in the community structure by doing so.<sup>41</sup>

Newspaper reporting of conflict tends to legitimize it,

as found by Nnaemeka.<sup>42</sup> This generates new status for the members of the conflict, either through the simple act of reporting the conflict, or through the labels the papers choose to apply to the conflict. Thus, military action against a government may be labeled as "insurgency," "guerilla action," or "terrorism," each generating different perceptions for the audience.

The Problem:

Following the theory of external social and institutional forces affecting news content, it appears possible that the selection and processing of information into news results from an undetermined formula which balances the numerous factors influencing the journalist.

Recognizing that social and institutional forces combine into a network of shifting influences, this study tested the influence wielded by a single major institution in a local setting. Whether the relationships demonstrated between newspapers and institutional forces in general hold for a specific relationship with a single institution comprised one question. Another involved whether the influence of a single institution in a community could be effectively separated from this institutional network for study of its effects.

The institution selected was the United States military, a vast, pervasive, bureaucratic organization. The local setting involved three towns similar in population and economic

characteristics. To test the effects of proximity of the institution within a local setting, two towns selected for study were adjacent to military installations while the third town had no military installation nearby. The effects were measured as variance in the quantity and quality of military news stories in the local newspapers.

Expressed as hypotheses:

H<sub>1</sub>: There will be more military news coverage in the local paper of a military town than there will be in the local paper of a nonmilitary town.

H<sub>2</sub>: The news coverage of the military in the local paper of a military town will be more favorable to the military than the news coverage of military news in the local paper of a nonmilitary town.

H<sub>3</sub>: The quantity and quality of military news coverage in the local papers of two military towns will not differ significantly.

Concepts contained in this study include: "the amount of news coverage in local newspapers," "the favorableness of news coverage," "military news," "the military as an institution," and "the proximity of military installations to a town."

"Military news" consists of any straight news story, feature or analytical article which has, as its main topic, personnel or activities connected with the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Reserves or National Guard. It does

not include editorials, letters to the editor or editorial cartoons.

"Amount of news" concerns both the number of articles and the mean article length of military news articles printed over a specified span of time.

"Favorableness of news" concerns whether the articles and assertions printed reflect the military in a positive or negative manner, or are essentially neutral. This is a subjective judgment of the reaction the articles elicit in the audience, and how much, if any, editorializing the journalist performed in writing the article.

"The military as an institution" can refer to the total organization of the armed forces within the United States, including its political links and legal impact on the citizens of America. For this study, however, the military as an institution refers to the role the particular institution plays within the local community under study. Thus, this concept refers to the military installation as a recognized government agency located within the community. It is established as a newsworthy entity in the political and formal contacts the installation has with community leaders to address the nature of the relationship between the community and the installation.

"Proximity of the military installation" refers to both the geographical and conceptual proximity of the installation to the community. The military installations included in this study

are geographically within 10 miles of the city limits. Conceptual proximity is achieved through the integration of members of the military installation into the community housing and family members into the community schools. It is also achieved through the economic impact of the installation on the community and the subsequent economic dependence of a portion of the community population on either the installation itself or the spending patterns of the installation members.

Theoretical Linkages:

There are several assumptions in this study which must be addressed before the hypotheses themselves can be examined. The first concerns the legitimacy of comparing the content of three local newspapers from three separate towns.

Similarities in newspaper editorial policies have been noted, especially in newspapers with relatively low circulation. These similarities occur in the way news stories are gathered and processed for publication.<sup>43</sup> Inherent in these similarities is a dependence on press releases and wire services for news, particularly in areas of news with which the journalist is unfamiliar as found by Whitney and Becker.<sup>44</sup> As newspapers select and print news to reflect the audience's affinities, as found by Kariel and Rosenvall<sup>45</sup>, rural towns with similar populations (audience) could be expected to have newspapers which select and print news following similar guidelines.

The editors of each of the three newspapers analyzed

profess to print news without bias. All three remain under local control and are free from direct or covert political pressure, according to their managing editors. The similarities in size, editorial policies and control of these newspapers makes comparison of news content feasible.

All three papers belong to the Associated Press for national and international news stories. The majority of the military news stories printed in all papers were, in fact, derived from Associated Press wires. While the Associated Press made these, and many other stories available, there was editorial judgment applied in selecting which stories to print, how much of these stories to print, and variation in journalistic style applied to the news. It was this variation in the amount of detail and presentation of the story which formed a basis for comparison. It was expected that military news stories generating national interest would be derived from the same source. It was not significant that that source was a military spokesman, a press release or an Associated Press story. The area of interest lay in how the story was handled by each of the three papers.

Recognizing that newspapers play a key role in forming public opinion and reflecting the public's concerns in news, the second assumption concerns the feasibility of comparing three communities with the expectation that the presence or absence of a military installation will be the only significant factor

affecting military news content.

While it is certainly foolhardy to attempt to compare the opinion of individuals matched on demographic data, public opinion polls and sampling theory rest on the assumption that a population's attitude and behavior can be predicted on a limited scale. In an attempt to eliminate as many potential intervening variables as possible, the populations of the three cities were matched on median age, educational level, racial balance, population density and economy. Regional variables in attitude were reduced by restricting the sample cities to the south or southwestern United States. Care was taken to ensure that each city maintained its own identity and government and was not a suburb or extension of a larger municipality.

Tichenor<sup>46</sup> has found that a community's relationship and use of its local newspaper is correlated with the size and complexity of the community. Thus, it was assumed that three communities, matched demographically as outlined above, will use their newspapers to reflect and lead public opinion in the same way.

The first hypothesis states that there will be more military news coverage in a military town than in a nonmilitary town. This is expected as a newspaper's response to two factors. The first is the needs and the wants of the audience. As members of the military installation integrate themselves into the community, they become a part of the audience for which the

newspaper writes. Cohen and Young<sup>47</sup> identify the response to audience needs and wants as "market theory." The newspaper identifies what areas comprise the public interest and print the news to fit what the audience wants to see. If a significant portion of the audience is interested in the events and activities of the military, then the paper's response should be to provide increased coverage of military news. A nonmilitary town lacks that portion of the audience interested in military news; thus there is no need for the local paper to provide increased coverage of military news.

The second factor is the presence of the military installation as a newsworthy entity in itself. The installation impacts both economically and socially on the local community. The activities of the installation, particularly those public relations activities involving civilian members of the community, provide more opportunities to gather news of local interest. Military installations are careful to provide regular press releases of activities and events which may impact on the local community. These releases are also intended to foster goodwill in the community for the installation. Bethell's<sup>48</sup> findings on the relatively high percentage of news stories which originate with the news source rather than by journalistic initiative implies that sustained activity by the military installations in providing news will result in more military news coverage than in a newspaper receiving no regular military news releases.



The second hypothesis concerns the favorability of news treatment and states that the military news coverage in the local papers of the military towns will be more favorable than the military news coverage in the local papers of the nonmilitary town.

The work of Lang and Lang<sup>49</sup> and Boreman<sup>50</sup> has established that the media distort reality in their presentation of news. Some distortion is the product of a particular media and some results from decisions inherent in the process of journalism.

The potential distortion of reality, or the way the news is presented, results from the culmination of many factors, including the social and institutional forces working on the media. One such influence is audience impact. The integration of military members and civilians working for the military into the reading audience is a consideration the local paper cannot ignore in deciding how to present military news. This can be particularly true when the newspaper's potential circulation is essentially determined by the population of the city.

The work of Sachsman<sup>51</sup> and Singletary<sup>52</sup> in demonstrating newspaper use of press releases indicate that providing regular press releases to the local paper may affect both the frequency of news and how it is presented. Military press releases are self-serving, intended both to inform the public and to improve the military image. Use of these press releases by the local paper, either verbatim, or with minor modification, presumably

will assist the military's goal of a favorable image locally.

Military press releases are a part of the public relations campaign the military wages both locally and nation-wide. It is based on a concept of demystifying the military for civilians. Albritton and Manheim<sup>53</sup> demonstrated that a public relations campaign can be effective in improving the portrayal of a nation in the U.S. press, thus it is reasonable to expect that the local public relations efforts of military installations are at least somewhat successful in improving both the installation's representation and that of the military in general in the local papers.

The third hypothesis states that there will be no differences in amount and favorability of military news coverage in the local papers of the military towns. This is actually a test of the construct validity of the experiment. If all other intervening variables have been adequately controlled for, then the only variable affecting military news coverage should be the presence or absence of the military base. If the simple presence of a military installation affects the military news coverage, independent of the specialized nature of the military installation or its activities, then the effect on military news coverage of each military installation in the two towns studied will be the same.

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

#### Background:

This study contains a content analysis of military news articles from three cities. In that analysis the cities were matched on these demographic criteria: population, geographical space occupied, racial balance, educational level of the residents, types of business and industry contributing to the local economy and median age of the population. The intent of the matching was to find cities which were as similar as possible in both their populations and their economies. The search was limited to the south and southwestern United States, to reduce the possible effects of regional influence. For comparison of demographic data of the three cities selected, see Table 1.

Review of 1983 U.S. Bureau of Census data generated a list of eight cities with acceptably similar demographic data. The primary constraints considered by the researcher were the population, racial balance, educational balance and median age. The other characteristics were then reviewed to generate this list of eight potential candidates for comparison.

As originally conceived, this study was to have been a comparison of military news stories from two cities, one housing a military installation and the other "strictly civilian."

Table 1: Population Data\*

City	Population		Race			Median Age Years	Education Level	
	Total Persons	Per Sq Mile	Wht	Blk	Hisp		(% Compl) HS	Coll
Anniston, Alabama	29,523	1,426	58.8	40.3	1.17	31.9	56.1	15.2
Columbus, Mississippi	27,383	2,402	54.9	44.4	.61	27.0	54.6	16.9
Lufkin, Texas	28,562	1,393	70.3	25.9	6.30	29.3	58.5	15.8

\*Figures from U.S. Bureau of Census, 1983 report.

Anniston, Alabama, housing a large military installation, had been selected as the military town. The researcher's familiarity with the town and the Army installation facilitated the gathering of data from this city. The discovery of an Air Force base within the limits of the next city deemed most similar to Anniston, Alabama -- Columbus, Mississippi -- generated the inclusion of that city as a second military town, and the selection of the third most similar city -- Lufkin, Texas -- as the nonmilitary city.

The discriminating factor in the selection of which cities were selected for review from the list of eight derived from demographic data revolved around the local newspaper. The newspapers had to be independent, similar in size, circulation, ownership and editorial policies. These constraints were essential to make the comparisons of news coverage manageable and to limit intervening variables. Some cities similar to Anniston did not print an independent local paper, or published only weekly, rather than daily. The researcher had to make one concession in choosing Columbus, Mississippi, for review, as its local paper publishes only six days a week. This factor, although inconvenient, was manageable, as the paper was very similar to the other two dailies in format, size and local impact.

The Cities:

Anniston, Alabama has a population of 29,523 with

relatively slow population growth in the past five years. The city is located on a major highway between Atlanta, Georgia, and Birmingham, Alabama, in the center of the state. It is closely bounded to the south by Oxford, Alabama, and to the north by Jacksonville, thus limiting the city's potential for expansion. The area immediately surrounding these three cities is rural farmland or wooded hillsides.<sup>1</sup>

Manufacturing, retail and wholesale trade account for 40 percent of Anniston's workforce. Civilians working for the government comprise the next largest group of employees at 27.6 percent. The balance of civilian workers primarily consists of professionals and related fields at 23.5 percent.<sup>2</sup> See Table 2.

In general, Anniston enjoys a positive relationship with the two military installations nearby, although there are areas of conflict. The Anniston Army Depot is often the target for environmentalists because of ongoing waste disposal conflicts. Fort McClellan's training ranges, adjacent to some housing areas, generate issues of noise pollution and fear of the chemical training taking place.<sup>3</sup>

Anniston houses Fort McClellan, an Army installation consisting of the Chemical and Military Police Schools and Basic Combat Training Brigade. The post has a population of 9,800 military and 1,600 civilians and is located five miles to the north of Anniston.<sup>4</sup> The fort has a fluctuating student population, in addition to its permanent party personnel, which

Table 2: Percent Residents Employed in Major Categories of Work\*

City	Employed (Percent)					
	Manuftg	Trade	Profess	Govern	Unemploy	
Anniston, Alabama	20.0	19.9	23.5	27.6	10.5	100%
Columbus, Mississippi	22.2	23.5	23.1	21.4	8.4	100%
Lufkin, Texas	28.3	22.9	20.4	14.7	3.6	100%

\*Figures from U.S. Bureau of Census, 1983 report.

averages 4,825. The fort also provides support services to 26,294 military retired personnel, living in and around Anniston.<sup>5</sup>

Also adjacent to the city is the Anniston Army Depot, a facility which repairs armored tracked vehicles and artillery, and stores ammunition, missiles, small arms and strategic materials. The population of the Anniston Army Depot is 60 military and 4,800 civilians. It is located 10 miles west of Anniston. While Fort McClellan is an open post, readily accessible to the public, the Anniston Army Depot is closed, requiring restricted access.<sup>6</sup>

Fort McClellan's impact on Anniston is both economic and social. The open post policy allows civilians to hunt and fish on the fort's training ranges when they are not in use. The fort also allows the gathering of firewood in certain areas of its ranges. The social impact is felt in the large military and government civilian population residing in Anniston.

The economic impact of a military installation on the community can be determined through the use of gross wages and salaries of civilian and military personnel, local area military retiree pay, local contract and military construction expenditures and, where applicable, local education aid funds. Approximately 70 percent of the military, retiree and civilian payroll is spent in the region of influence (ROI) or local area. Direct spending, including contracts, construction and



educational aid add to the impact. The Gross Income Multiplier represents the amount of income generated by each dollar of basic expenditure plus the expenditure itself. (Each dollar spent represents so much profit over the value of that dollar to someone else.)

To generate the total economic impact on a local area, the total payroll is multiplied by .70, to represent dollars spent in the local area. To this figure is added expenditures for local contracts and military construction, and the educational aid. The total is then multiplied by the Gross Income Multiplier to generate the economic impact for the local area.

Fort McClellan's economic impact totals \$213,963,000. Anniston Army Depot adds another \$203,077,700 to this figure. In light of Anniston's total economic worth, the military contributes \$417,040,700 and is a key factor in the city's economic vitality.<sup>7</sup>

Columbus, Mississippi, has a population of 27,383 spread over 17.4 square miles. The city is located in an essentially rural area and is surrounded by farmland. Manufacturing and trade account for 45 percent of the civilian workforce while 23.1 percent is employed in professional and related services. The government is the next biggest employer, having 21.4 percent of the workforce.<sup>8</sup>

Columbus is a conservative town in a conservative state. It is not likely to advocate free choice for abortion or gun

control legislation.<sup>9</sup>

Columbus Air Force Base is located just north of the city limits. Activities of the base include both undergraduate and advanced pilot training, support of the Air Reserve and the Air National Guard. It is home to the Air Force Office of Special Investigations, the Detachment 2, 24th Weather Squadron and the 1949 Communications Squadron, which provides communication and air traffic control support.

Columbus AFB employs a total of 3,801 full-time persons, including 3,075 military and 736 civilians. It is a closed post, requiring identification and authorization to enter.

In accomplishing its mission of training pilots, Columbus AFB uses an average of 195 aircraft and flies 76,504 hours annually. This generates the only major source of conflict between the town and the base, noise pollution. Although the training aircraft, T-37s and T-38s are not the worst noise polluters in the Air Force inventory, the proximity of the runways and low-level flying over housing does generate some complaints. The overall relationship between the base and the town is positive, with an attitude of open communication.<sup>10</sup>

The total economic impact of Columbus AFB on the city of Columbus equals \$137,812,900 annually. The majority of this impact is felt through the payroll of the military and civilians working at the base. The base takes care to inform the city leaders of the benefits derived from the base, publishing an

annual "Columbus AFB Stockholders Report" and "Economic Resource Impact Statement."<sup>11</sup>

Lufkin, Texas, has a population of 28,562 spread over 20.5 square miles in east Texas. Located near the Louisiana border, between the Davy Crockett National Forest and Sam Rayburn Lake, it is a convenient location for the recreationally minded. Several small towns lie along the highways leading to Lufkin, but the surrounding area is essentially rural.

Slightly over 50 percent of Lufkin's employed population works in manufacturing or trade. Another 20.4 percent is in professional or related fields. Government employees account for 14.7 percent of the workers, with construction being the only other significant industry in the area, occupying 6.6 percent of Lufkin's population.<sup>12</sup>

Lufkin's only significant tie with the military occurred in the 1970s, when a large number of installation-level printing contracts were awarded to the local printing businesses. These contracts consisted primarily of leaflets and booklets published by the installations to explain the nature and mission of their posts. These contracts are now primarily with firms located in San Diego, California, and several large eastern printing firms.<sup>13</sup>

#### The Newspapers:

The Anniston Star claims to be "Alabama's largest home-owned newspaper."<sup>14</sup> This claim is based on its ownership by

Brandt Ayers and his family since its founding and a circulation of 33,000.

Established in August 1883, The Anniston Star merged with The Daily Hot Blast in 1912, but retained its original title. The newspaper is now affiliated with the Consolidated Publishing Company, but retains its private ownership and control.<sup>15</sup>

The Anniston Star safely can be considered a liberal newspaper. It was one of two local southern newspapers to endorse George McGovern in his campaign for the presidency. While the paper is "Not wed to the Democratic Party, we find ourselves endorsing the majority of their candidates."<sup>16</sup> The Anniston Star also endorsed civil rights before it was fashionable in the south, occasionally endangering their readership level. Currently the paper supports "no favorites in city hall," and feels free to highlight the mistakes of anyone involved in the city's operation.<sup>17</sup> This includes both Fort McClellan and the Anniston Army Depot.

The liberal bent of this newspaper is hardly due to new blood in the controlling chairs. The editing chief, Cody Hall, has been in his position since 1949. The paper reflects the philosophy of the owner, although he and his family have little direct contact with the daily operation of the newsroom.<sup>18</sup>

Both local and state news is heavily emphasized; however, the paper also prints national and international stories. It belongs to the Associated Press and uses articles from the New

York Times and Chicago Tribune. Approximately 50 percent of the paper is devoted to advertising; news stories, features and editorials vie for the remaining space.

The Anniston Star regularly employs 20 reporters and 150 support personnel, including editors, administrators, printing and delivery personnel. Subscriptions are a bargain at \$7.00 monthly for daily delivery, including Sundays.

Columbus' The Commercial Dispatch hails itself as "Mississippi's most progressive newspaper," "printing all the news that's fit to print."<sup>19</sup> The paper originated from the merger of two competing dailies, The Commercial, established in 1894, and The Dispatch, established in 1879. These papers were consolidated into The Commercial Dispatch by Birney Imes Sr. in March, 1922. The paper remains family-owned, with Birney Imes Jr. inheriting ownership in 1947.<sup>20</sup>

The Commercial Dispatch remains essentially conservative in reflecting the philosophy of the state of Mississippi. As expressed by Chief Editor Jennifer Allen, "This paper is not likely to advocate free choice for abortion or gun control."<sup>21</sup> The paper reflects the tastes of its readership. Reporters are free to cover all categories of news, bound only by the limits of "good taste and libel."<sup>22</sup>

The Commercial Dispatch prints selections from local, national and international news, with emphasis on state and local news. Generally, only one international news article will appear

in the paper each day, unless Americans are involved. The majority of national and international news articles are drawn from Associated Press wires, while state and local news is covered by the paper's staff of 24 reporters.

The size of The Commercial Dispatch varies daily, from as few as two sections to a Sunday edition containing five sections plus inserts. The paper prints Monday-Friday and Sundays. There is no Saturday edition published. Advertising space varies from 65 percent advertising on Sundays to 55 percent on other days.<sup>23</sup>

Circulation of The Commercial Dispatch is 18,000. It serves as Columbus' only local newspaper. Subscription rates vary from \$4.50 for Sunday delivery only to \$7.00 for daily delivery, including Sundays.

The paper maintains "friendly relations and open communications" with Columbus AFB. News articles about the base operations and personnel are gathered both through the Public Affairs Office at the base and via personnel interview. As a standard procedure, reporters must coordinate with the Public Affairs Office to interview military and civilian personnel on base.

Although not family-owned, The Lufkin Daily News enjoys the independence and local control of both The Anniston Star and The Commercial Dispatch. The paper is owned and financed by Cox Newspapers, located in Atlanta, Georgia; however, control of the newsroom and publishing policies remains with the editor and

publisher, Joe Murray. Involved with the paper's operation for over 20 years, Murray maintains a conservative editorial bent and prevents obvious bias in the news reporting.<sup>24</sup>

The Lufkin Daily News employs 14 reporters to serve a circulation of 17,170. Approximately 55 percent of the paper is committed to advertising, slightly more in the larger Sunday editions. The paper publishes daily; however, this is a recent change. Like The Commercial Dispatch, The Lufkin Daily News omitted Saturday editions until 1981.<sup>25</sup>

The Lufkin Daily News also varies in size daily, from two sections to five or more on Sundays. "We never get below 16 pages, even on a slow day," said City Editor Phil Latham. Subscription rates include daily delivery plus Sundays, and cost only \$5.52 monthly.

Procedure:

Following the painful process of selecting the three cities and their local newspapers for comparison, the researcher arbitrarily selected the year 1981 as the test period. It was determined that no major military issues arose during that period which polarized public opinion or caused the the local newspapers to deviate from their normal reporting patterns of military news.

Within this period 52 dates were selected randomly via computer. Those dates falling on a Saturday were dropped from the sampling frame, generating a total of 48 dates on which editions of each newspaper would be reviewed. The Saturday dates

were dropped because The Commercial Dispatch did not publish on Saturdays. (See Appendix A.)

The researcher visited each city to review the local newspapers for each of the 48 dates. Microfilm copies of each newspaper for the year 1981 were found in either the public library or a nearby college library. None of the newspapers maintained their own microfilm copies, depending instead on bound, full-size editions of each paper.

All straight news, feature and analytical articles pertaining to any facet of the military were drawn for analysis. Categories of the military included the United States Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines, Reserves and National Guard. Articles not used in this study included editorials, editorial cartoons and letters to the editor. News articles concerning the contested MX missile program were also deleted, as review indicated that the articles concerned political maneuvering and policy-making, rather than strategy or military concerns.

Once drawn, the news articles from each paper were analyzed for amount of military news and favorableness of news content toward the military.

The number of news articles for each paper and the mean article length of military news articles were measured to determine the amount of military news.

Column inches of news were measured as the total square inches of space occupied by the body of each news article



exclusive of the headline. Margin allowances between columns of the same story were included in the measurement. One-half the standard margin between each story in the paper was added to the beginning and end of each article measurement. Length measurements were taken from the top line of text to the midpoint of the bottom margin separating the story from the one below. In the event the story occurred at the bottom of the page, one-half the standard margin width was added to the measurement, ending at the bottom line of text.

Headlines were not included in these measurements for two reasons: first, while they are an indication of the perceived prominence of news, headlines do not add information; they merely repeat information found in the story itself; second, extreme differences among the three local newspapers in the presentation of headlines would have potentially biased the results.

Favorableness of news content was measured via coders on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1-5, as follows:

1. Directly Unfavorable
2. Indirectly Unfavorable
3. Neutral
4. Indirectly Favorable
5. Directly Favorable

Each article was broken down into a list of assertions by the researcher. Coders were instructed to read the article, then rate each assertion on the above scale, using the paragraph as

the unit of context. (For complete coder instructions, see Appendix B.)

Point values for the assertions were totaled for each article, generating individual article scores. The articles were then categorized according to topic. The article scores for each paper, within each topic were then totaled for comparison. The categories of topics were selected following a review of all the news articles drawn, and are as follows:

1. Accidents
2. Crime/Treason
3. Personnel
4. Vietnam
5. Policy
6. Readiness (Development, Training, Budget)
7. Civilians

Two coders were used to grade the assertions. The researcher maintained responsibility for totaling article and category scores. The coders, both graduate students at the University of Texas College of Communications, worked independently. Neither had direct affiliation with any facet of the military, nor any immediate family members who were members of the military.

#### The Pretest:

The first pretest was conducted to measure reliability between the coders and clarify any problems with the coder

instructions. The test consisted of ten articles drawn from current editions of the subject newspapers. The articles were broken down into assertions by the researcher and presented in the same format used for the actual test.

Problems identified by this pretest included the inadequacy of the paragraph as the context unit. Normal journalistic style uses unattributed quotes occurring as separate paragraphs, the attribution generally occurring in a preceding paragraph. Confusion concerning what contributed to a favorable military image caused one coder to implement personal values into the coding of several articles, generating an initially disappointing reliability ratio of .54.

Following individual training sessions with each coder, wherein the missions and objectives of the military were briefly outlined and specific instruction concerning what constituted a favorable versus an unfavorable image of the military was given, a second pretest was conducted. In this test, the article was to be used as the unit of context, in the event the paragraph did not provide enough information to make an intelligent decision. The coder instructions were further modified to emphasize the direct versus indirect discriminators and encourage full use of the scale. Again, ten articles from current editions of the subject newspapers were coded.

Results showed a significant improvement with a reliability ratio of .71. Although this did not achieve the

targeted reliability ratio of .75, discussions with the coders indicated that they felt confident about the instructions and their ability to discriminate assertions effectively. Collapsing the scale to three measures, favorable, neutral and unfavorable, yielded a reliability ratio of .91, indicating that the coders were, at least, discriminating favorability reliably. Part of the improved reliability was also attributed by the coders to a practice effect. It was decided to proceed with the test at this time.

The coders were given copies of all the articles drawn and the list of assertions for each article. The assertions were divided into paragraphs, to facilitate reference to the articles. There was a total of 70 articles, each averaging 10 paragraphs in length. The coders worked at their own pace.

#### Analysis of the Results:

For both  $H_1$  and  $H_2$  the independent variable is the presence or absence of a military installation within the city. This is considered a nominal variable.

$H_1$ : There will be more military news coverage in local newspapers of a military town than there will be military news coverage in the local paper of a nonmilitary town.

The measure of the number of articles printed and the total column inches of military news constituted ratio-level variables. A t-test was used to test for significant differences between the dependent variables for the military and nonmilitary

town local newspapers. Significance was measured at the .05 level.

H<sub>2</sub>: The news coverage of the military in the local newspaper of a military town will be more favorable than the news coverage in the local papers of a nonmilitary town.

Favorability, initially measured on the 5-point scale, was then combined into article scores and category scores for each newspaper. This was treated as interval-level data. Again, a t-test was used to test for significant differences between the three local newspapers, both within each category and for all the articles combined. Significance was measured at the .05 level.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### The Stories:

A total of 70 articles was reviewed, including 28 from The Anniston Star, 29 from The Commercial Dispatch and 13 from The Lufkin Daily News. Prior to analyzing either article length or favorability scores, the articles were separated into categories of news as follows:

1. Accidents: vehicular, plane and helicopter crashes or training accidents resulting in equipment damage or personnel injury or death.

2. Crime/Treason: violations of civil laws or military regulations and any judicial action pertaining to these violations.

3. Personnel: stories spotlighting one individual, usually either a human interest story or a biographical sketch of a new commander.

4. Vietnam: stories concerning personnel or activities connected with the Vietnam War. Stories ranged from the recovery of bodies in Hanoi to Agent Orange controversy to the activities of Vietnam veterans.

5. Policy: stories about either military policy on a given issue or political policy directly affecting the military.

Examples include the military's refusal to enlist personnel with high arches in their feet to the Supreme Court's upholding of the constitutionality of excluding women from the draft.

6. Readiness: stories concerning any facet of the military which impacted on its readiness to accomplish its missions in war or peace. This included training exercises, budget proposals and equipment developments.

7. Civilians: interactions the military had with civilian groups or agencies. This included stories about the Army Corps of Engineers efforts to maintain a city park and city activities.

As seen in Table 3, certain categories of news were more heavily reported than others, a trend which remained consistent in all three newspapers. Categories of news more heavily covered included accidents and crime/treason stories. The trial of Marine Private Garwood, accused of treason for his actions while a prisoner of war in Vietnam, was heavily covered, as were helicopter crashes and plane accidents.

Only two stories appeared in all three papers simultaneously. Several other stories, not of an immediate nature, appeared in each paper at some point during the test period. The two stories were about a fatal jet crash on the USS Nimitz, a naval aircraft carrier, and a story about the action of the Supreme Court of the United States in upholding the constitutionality of excluding women from draft registration.

Table 3: Number of Articles in Each Newspaper by Category

Category	Anniston Star	Commercial Dispatch	Lufkin Daily News
1. Accidents	6	7	2
2. Crime/Treason	5	6	3
3. Personnel	4	4	2
4. Vietnam	3	3	1
5. Policy	3	3	1
6. Readiness	6	3	3
7. Civilians	1	3	1
	28	29	13
			N=70



While the impact of the Supreme Court's action is immediately apparent, it is not clear why the story about the jet crash on the Nimitz should have been reported in all three papers studied, while many other accident stories, of equal magnitude in terms of damage, injury and death did not.

Each paper also printed at least one story about the military budget, although these stories did not appear simultaneously. Each military town's story concerned requests for increases in the military budget and/or military pay. The nonmilitary town's budget story concerned cutting spending hikes, a definite shift in emphasis.

#### Amount of News:

The first hypothesis stated that there would be more military news coverage in the local papers of the military towns than in the local paper of the nonmilitary town. This was to be analyzed by both the number of articles printed and mean article length. The number of military news articles printed in the time period studied appears to support the first hypothesis. Both military town newspapers, The Anniston Star and The Commercial Dispatch, ran more than twice as many military news articles as did the nonmilitary town newspaper, The Lufkin Daily News. Analysis of the mean article length of military news, however, indicated that the results were not so simplistic.

As seen in Table 4, comparison of mean article length of military news for each newspaper via t-tests generated no

Table 4: T-test of Mean Article Length of Military News Stories Between Newspapers

Newspaper	Number of Cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	T-value
Anniston Star (Army)	28	14.91	10.43	1.71
Commercial Dispatch (AF)	29	11.19	4.92	
Anniston Star (Army)	28	14.91	10.43	2.82*
Lufkin Daily News (civilian)	13	8.39	4.39	
Commercial Dispatch (AF)	29	11.19	4.92	1.84
Lufkin Daily News (civilian)	13	8.39	4.39	

\*significant at  $p < .05$

statistically significant differences between the amount of military news in the two military town newspapers, The Anniston Star and The Commercial Dispatch. This supports the third hypothesis, which states that there will be no statistically significant differences in the amount or favorability of military news coverage in the military town newspapers. Both military towns had more military news, measured by mean article length, than did the nonmilitary town paper, The Lufkin Daily News. This result was in the direction expected by the first hypothesis. The difference, however, between the military town, Anniston, and the nonmilitary town, Lufkin, was statistically significant at  $p < .05$ ; while the difference between the military town, Columbus, and the nonmilitary town, Lufkin, was not statistically significant.

It is possible that there is some element indigenous to the military which affects the amount of news coverage, as measured by the amount of space devoted in the local newspaper to military topics. This element may be related to the specific missions of the installations studied, or to inherent differences between the two branches of the military represented in this study, the Army and the Air Force. If present, this element can act as an intervening variable which affects comparisons of military town news coverage to each other, and to military news coverage of a nonmilitary town.

Favorability of News:

Analysis of the favorability scores for military news was conducted in two series of t-tests. The second hypothesis stated that the coverage of military news in the military town newspapers would be more favorable than the military news coverage in the local paper of the nonmilitary town. The first t-test compared the favorability scores between newspapers for all the categories of news combined. As seen in Table 5, the mean favorability scores for military news were higher in the military towns than in the nonmilitary town newspaper. Anniston's mean favorability score was 2.89, Columbus' mean score was 2.84 and Lufkin's mean score was 2.80. The t-values, however, indicated that none of the differences in mean scores was statistically significant.

The mean favorability score for each newspaper also indicated that military news was rated as slightly negative, when compared to the absolute neutral value of 3.00. This may have been a factor of the type of news stories reported, as much as the writing style of the individual journalists.

A second series of t-tests was conducted after separating the articles in each newspaper into categories of news, then collapsing these categories into two sets, "deviance" news and "nondeviance" news. An analysis of variance of the categories of news by their favorability scores indicated that there is statistically significant differences in the favorability ratings between some categories, see Table 6. The reliability of this

Table 5: T-test of Favorability Scores Between Newspapers:  
All Categories Combined

Newspaper	Number of Cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	T-value
Anniston Star (Army)	28	2.89	.32	.58 ns
Commercial Dispatch (AF)	29	2.84	.29	
Anniston Star (Army)	28	2.89	.32	.93 ns
Lufkin Daily News (civilian)	13	2.80	.28	
Commercial Dispatch (AF)	29	2.84	.29	.46 ns
Lufkin Daily News (civilian)	13	2.80	.28	

Table 6: Analysis of Variance of Favorability Scores by Category

Category	Number of Cases	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. Accidents	15	2.60	.20
2. Crime/Treason	14	2.67	.20
3. Personnel	10	3.16	.08
4. Vietnam	7	2.95	.18
5. Policy	7	3.03	.25
6. Readiness	12	2.98	.34
7. Civilians	5	2.83	.28
F = 9.21                      p<.001                      eta squared = .46			

relationship can be challenged, however, because of the small sample sizes.

Accepting that the categories of news can vary in favorability ratings, potentially masking differences between newspapers when the categories are collapsed together, the researcher then separated the categories into two sets. Deviance stories, those concerning actions which deviate from societal expectations of the military, were separated from nondeviance categories. Nondeviance categories included stories which did not deviate from societal expectations and norms, regardless of the positive or negative outcomes of the actions in those stories. Categories 1 and 2, accidents and crime/treason, comprised set 1 (deviance stories), while all other categories: personnel, Vietnam, policy, readiness and civilians comprised set 2 (nondeviance stories).

A discriminant analysis, comparing the collapsed sets of news against the article favorability scores, indicated that the separation of categories was appropriate. The difference between the favorability scores in the two groups was found to be significant, using a Wilks Lambda statistic, value .61 and univariate F ratio of 43.84. These values were significant at  $p < .01$ .

Remembering that the second hypothesis predicted higher favorability scores for the military news in military town newspapers when compared to nonmilitary town newspapers, with no

stipulations pertaining to category of news, both sets of news should have resulted in mean favorability scores that were higher for the military towns than for the nonmilitary town. This did not happen.

The mean favorability score for military news in the set 1 for all three papers was lower than the mean favorability score in the set 2. As seen in Table 7, within the set 1, the mean favorability score of the nonmilitary town newspaper, The Lufkin Daily News, was higher than the mean favorability of either of the two military town newspapers. This result was the reverse of the expected findings; however, the difference between the mean scores was not sufficiently strong to attain statistical significance. Within the set 2, the mean favorability scores for each of the military towns was higher than the mean favorability score for the nonmilitary town newspaper, which was in the direction expected by the second hypothesis, but this difference was not statistically significant.

According to the second hypothesis, the favorability scores for the military news should have been higher in the local papers of the military towns than in the local papers of the nonmilitary town, regardless of the category of news. This was not supported in the set 1, where a reverse trend was observed in that the nonmilitary town's favorability score was higher than either of the military town's scores. The results in the set 2 indicated that the military town's scores were higher than the



Table 7: T-test of Favorability Scores by Sets of Deviance and Nondeviance News Categories

Set 1 (Categories 1-2)	Number of Cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	T-value
Anniston Star	11	2.63	.24	-.00 ns
Commercial Dispatch	13	2.63	.21	
Anniston Star	11	2.63	.24	-.03 ns
Lufkin Daily News	5	2.64	.09	
Commercial Dispatch	13	2.63	.21	-.04 ns
Lufkin Daily News	5	2.64	.09	
Set 2 (Categories 3-7)	Number of Cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	T-value
Anniston Star	17	3.06	.25	.51 ns
Commercial Dispatch	16	3.02	.24	
Anniston Star	17	3.06	.25	1.24 ns
Lufkin Daily News	8	2.90	.31	
Commercial Dispatch	16	3.02	.24	.90 ns
Lufkin Daily News	8	2.90	.31	

nonmilitary town's scores; however, none of the results attained statistical significance.

The third hypothesis stated that there should be no differences between military town newspapers in either the amount of favorability of military news coverage. There was no statistically significant difference found in comparison of the mean article length or number of news articles. There was also no statistically significant difference found in the mean favorability scores of the two military towns, Anniston and Columbus. The relevance of this finding is questionable, however, in light of the results attained when comparing favorability scores with the nonmilitary town, Lufkin.

Far fewer differences were found in the coverage of military news between military town newspapers and nonmilitary town newspapers than were expected. In summary:

Hypothesis 1 stated that there will be more military news coverage in the local paper of a military town than in the local paper of a nonmilitary town. This hypothesis was supported. Each of the military towns published twice as many military articles as did the nonmilitary town, and the average article length in the military towns did tend to be greater, although only one military-nonmilitary comparison on article length reached statistical significance.

Hypothesis 2 stated that the military news coverage in a military town local newspaper will be more favorable than the

military news coverage in a nonmilitary town newspaper. This hypothesis was not supported.

Hypothesis 3 stated that there will be no significant differences between the amount or favorability of military news coverage between military towns. This hypothesis was supported, showing construct validity for the differences in total amount of military coverage observed between the military and nonmilitary towns.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

This study compared the treatment of military news in the local newspapers of three towns: two housing military installations and the third having no military installation nearby. It was designed as a test of the impact of community values, proximity and audience impact on a single topic of news within a limited community. The amount and favorability of military news coverage was measured, to discover if it was affected by close, as opposed to distant contact with the military.

Military public relations efforts operate on two assumptions which rarely have been scientifically tested. The first is that the military's image is slightly negative; at best, the American public regards the military as a necessary evil. The second assumption is that this negative image is at least partly due to the unfair representation of the military by the news media. Both of these assumptions warrant examination.

Part of the discomfort generated by the military can be attributed to the nature of its goals. To accomplish its goals, the military uses money gained from the American taxpayer, who expects an efficiently run, effective fighting force in return for this investment. The news media have been effective in

highlighting examples of bureaucracy, inefficiency and waste within the military. This, in turn, generates resistance by the taxpayer to continue to expend huge amounts of money on military spending, and hurts the image of the military. The military, priding itself on the overall efficiency of its operations, regards the actions of the news media with suspicion, further increasing tensions between the two institutions.

Despite the tensions between the news media and the military, there still exists a mutually dependent relationship. The military must depend on the news media to keep the American public informed of its activities. The news media must rely on the military to make its activities and organization comprehensible to those not familiar with the military system.

The military remains a potentially controversial topic for the majority of the American public. Its size, funding and activities are constant sources for debate. This controversy and subsequent debate must be covered by the news media to keep the American public informed. The military must understand the factors which affect the news content, both in the selection of which stories are published and in how those stories are handled. Only in understanding how news can be influenced and how, in turn, that news influences the public, will an effective public relations program become possible.

Tichenor<sup>1</sup> in his studies of community newspapers, found that the selection of what news to print, the amount of space

devoted to a particular topic and the newspaper's approach to that topic reflected the amount of community conflict over that topic. It seemed reasonable that the community newspaper would treat a potentially controversial topic such as the military in a manner consistent with their treatment of other similar topics; thus the community newspapers could be used as a barometer of public opinion, and as a basis to compare the treatment of military news with the presence or absence of a military installation as a variable.

Considering the work of Luttbeg,<sup>2</sup> Rosenthal,<sup>3</sup> and Manheim<sup>4</sup> on proximity, it was assumed that the presence or absence of a military installation in the local town would affect the favorability and quantity of military news coverage in the town's local newspaper. The effects of community values, audience impact and economic impact were assumed to have combined to result in measurable differences between the military news coverage in military versus nonmilitary towns.

#### Amount of News:

Hypothesis 1 stated that there would be more military news coverage in the local paper of the military town than in the local paper of the nonmilitary town. This hypothesis was supported in that each military town published twice as many military articles as did the nonmilitary town. In addition, the military towns tended to publish longer military articles than the nonmilitary town, although only one of these

military-nonmilitary comparisons reached statistical significance. The difference between Anniston (military) and Lufkin (nonmilitary) in mean article length was found to be significant at  $p < .05$ , while the difference between Columbus (military) and Lufkin (nonmilitary) was not sufficiently high to attain statistical significance. Columbus, home of an Air Force base, publishes more than twice as many military news articles as does Lufkin (29 to 13), but these articles do not occupy a significantly larger portion of the newspaper's available space.

The difference in amount of military news between the two military towns, Anniston and Columbus, was not statistically significant. Anniston published 28 articles with a mean length of 14.91 column inches. Columbus published 29 articles with a mean length of 11.19 column inches. The lack of statistically significant differences between the mean article length of the two military cities, coupled with their closeness in number of military news articles printed, supports the third hypothesis, that the amount and favorability of military news coverage in the two military town newspapers is the same. However, when compared with the nonmilitary town newspaper, The Lufkin Daily News, only one of the military towns achieved statistical significance in their comparison of amount of military news, Anniston. Thus, although the differences in article length among all the cities indicate that the differences between the two military cities, Anniston and Columbus are not statistically significant, their

differences are sufficient to affect their relationship with the third, nonmilitary city, Lufkin. Possible reasons why Anniston (military) and Lufkin (nonmilitary) are significantly different in amount of news while Columbus (military) and Lufkin (nonmilitary) are not, must be considered.

The difference in amount of military news reported between the two military cities, Anniston and Columbus, lay in the mean length of the articles, not in the total number of articles printed. The greater length of articles in Anniston may be attributed to differences in the installations which affect both the audience configuration and relationship with the community.

Fort McClellan, located near Anniston, has three times as many military personnel and twice as many government-employed civilians working on the installation than does Columbus AFB. Fort McClellan employs 9,800 military and 1,600 civilians,<sup>5</sup> compared to Columbus AFB, which employs 3,801 military and 736 civilians.<sup>6</sup> The Anniston Army Depot also adds to the military audience within Anniston, giving the city a much greater military audience proportionate to the community size than is present in Columbus. The potential audience impact on the community newspaper may be greater in Anniston, resulting in more detailed, longer military news articles.

A second factor which may have affected the amount of local military news is the potential for controversy generated by each military installation. The simple presence of a military



installation within a community will generate some level of tension and potential for controversy. There is always that portion of the audience dedicated to the dismantling of both objects and organizations of war. The specific activities of the installation may also affect this potential.

Columbus AFB trains pilots to fly, an acceptable activity for the Air Force which generates little tension other than noise pollution. The base has no aerial gunnery ranges or other overtly violent demonstrations which could heighten the discomfort of the local community. Fort McClellan, located in Anniston, houses the Chemical School in an era in which the use of chemical warfare is hotly debated. Simulated chemical attacks, using colored smoke are conducted on training ranges regularly, within view of nearby housing areas. This provides a constant reminder of the issue. The Anniston Army Depot, a storage facility for "strategic materials" contributes to the tensions with the potential for waste disposal accidents. Anniston residents are concerned and involved in the issue of chemical training, sensitizing the population to the activities of the military in general. This may result in more detailed coverage of military news in the local paper in Anniston than in Columbus. While the differences are not statistically significant when comparing the two military cities, they do become apparent in comparing the military cities individually with a nonmilitary city.

The inability of the local paper of the military town, Columbus, to achieve statistically significant differences in mean article length when compared to the nonmilitary town, Lufkin, may indicate that there is some level of audience impact, community tension or controversy which must be attained before a local paper will devote more space to the topic of military news. Anniston apparently achieved that level, reflected in the statistically significant difference in mean article length between Anniston and the nonmilitary Lufkin. Columbus has not achieved that level yet. While its local paper publishes more articles than the nonmilitary paper, The Lufkin Daily News, these articles do not occupy more space within the paper.

Tichenor, et. al<sup>7</sup> have identified a wide variability in conflict sequences and points at which a local newspaper will enter the conflict by printing news about it. While not all military activities are controversial, it is possible to keep any controversy that does exist in the forefront of the public's mind by both printing articles about the controversy specifically and by printing articles about the military in general. The amount of attention paid by the newspaper to a particular topic can be an indicator of the amount of conflict that topic generates within the newspaper's audience. The Air Base in Columbus does not generate sufficient controversy, due to the innocuous nature of its activities, to warrant the added attention paid to the more controversial activities of the army base in Anniston.

The factor of the level of controversy of a military installation's activities, if present, may be an intervening variable which augments the effects of the military's presence within a town. As shown by the measurements of amount of military news coverage in the three towns, the simple presence of a military installation in itself is not sufficient to affect the amount of space devoted to military news. When combined with potentially controversial activities, however, the measured differences achieve statistical significance.

Favorability of News:

Hypothesis 2 stated that military news coverage in the local papers of the military towns would be more favorable than military news coverage in the local papers of the nonmilitary town. This hypothesis is not supported. When the scores are separated into categories of news, the nonmilitary town, Lufkin, actually has a higher mean favorability score than the military towns in the set 1. This reverse trend, however, is not sufficiently strong to achieve statistical significance. Within the set 2, the results showed that both military towns have higher mean favorability scores than the nonmilitary town, but the differences are not statistically significant.

Indications from these findings are that the local papers of nonmilitary towns may print less military news than the local papers of military towns, but the treatment of that news will be no more or less favorable than that granted by the local papers

of the military towns. Several factors may, at least partially, explain these findings.

First, there is the caviot of professional ethics. Each editor, when interviewed, advocated the absence of bias in their straight news stories, regardless of the paper's editorial position. The policy apparently worked in both directions; the favorable attitude of The Commercial Dispatch towards Columbus AFB did little to help the military image while the adversarial attitude of The Anniston Star towards both Fort McClellan and the Anniston Army Depot did not adversely affect the military image in that town's local newspaper. These findings indicate that the journalists did maintain a professional, neutral attitude in writing military news, regardless of their paper's editorial position.

The use of Associated Press copy as a news source for the majority of articles may have affected the stories more than was at first assumed. Of a total of 70 articles, 57 are derived from Associated Press wires. Sachsman's<sup>8</sup> findings indicate that reporters and editors rely on press releases for stories on topics with which they are not familiar. Singletary<sup>9</sup> found that nearly 20 percent of these press releases are used verbatim. Associated Press stories tend to be less judgemental or affected by local community values because they are written for the wide range of AP members.

If close proximity with a military installation generates

familiarity, then the local newspapers in the military towns would be expected to rely less on the data contained in the Associated Press wires and more on the local resources of their reporters. The nature of military bureaucracy, however, prevents this familiarity from occurring. It is an organization which resists familiarity from outsiders.

The military relies on complex organizations within the staff elements, represented by acronyms, which are difficult, if not impossible to decipher. The local reporter must first penetrate this administrative barrier to find the person with the knowledge he seeks. He must gain the contact's confidence that the information provided will be reported accurately. It can take from months to a year or more to develop a contact within the system. Once the relationship is operating smoothly, the contact inevitably is reassigned to another post, due to standard personnel rotations, and the reporter is left to begin again.

Obtaining inside information from official military sources is no easier than the unofficial process. In any situation when public comment is called for, the military public relations departments rely on prepared news releases, rarely allowing further questioning by reporters. The reporter must wait for more detailed information to be cleared for release. This process is not at the top of most staff element's priority list, thus it takes time. Thus the reporter in the military town often finds that, for fast-breaking news, access to more or

better information about the situation is impossible. He is left with the same channels of access, press releases and the Associated Press wire copy, as reporters in nonmilitary towns. Facing the same deadlines, the reporter must content himself with printing essentially the same information.

An intriguing finding was that military news scored as slightly negative overall in all three papers. Breaking the articles into news sets showed that the set 1 score equals 2.63 for all papers, while the set 2 score ranges from 2.90 to 3.05. While military personnel might be quick to highlight this finding as an indicator of journalistic bias, it may be viewed as more of the regular gatekeeping function of the news editors in selecting which stories to print. The pattern of military news reporting follows the trend of news in general: disasters and crime are heavily reported with policy and human interest stories following far behind in representation. It was the topic of the story, rather than journalistic bias in reporting it that generated the low scores.

The third hypothesis stated that there would be no significant differences in the amount and favorability of military news in the local papers of military towns. This hypothesis is supported, but the weight of this finding is questionable in light of the minimal findings of differences when compared to nonmilitary town treatment of military news.

Conclusion:

The results of this study may be somewhat surprising to military public relations advisors, considering the longstanding attitude toward the media treatment of military news. This dispells the notion that the military is the media's "whipping boy," second only to politicians as a favorite target for critical news and investigative reporters. The military cannot conclude that the quality of military news results from deliberate bias; rather it appears that military news treatment suffers only from the standard principles affecting processing of information into news.

Results indicated that audience impact and the proximity of a military installation do have an impact on the amount of military news carried in the local newspapers, in terms of number of articles. The total space devoted to the topic of military news appears to be partially dependent on the specific activities of the installation, rather than the mere presence of the military itself. Community values and audience impact, however, have no effect on the favorability of news in the military towns, when compared to the nonmilitary town.

Understanding how the media selects and publishes news, including the influences which affect what information is selected for presentation, will enable the military to better manage their public relations programs. The results of this study indicate that the military has little basis for its attitude of media bias toward the military. It also indicates

that there are positive steps that the military could take to improve media-military relations and facilitate the exchange of information between these two organizations. It is time for the military to stop alleging media bias and to correct its own programs to alleviate the tensions.



## APPENDIX A

### RANDOMLY SAMPLED DATES

The following dates were randomly selected by a computer program. Military news articles contained in the editions of newspapers printed on these dates comprised the samples for analysis. All dates were in the year 1981.

January :	11, 16,21
February :	05,11,20,23,26
March :	09,29
April :	01,05
May :	01,08,09,18,19,24,26
June :	01,05,14,21,22,25,26
July :	06,29
August :	02,14
September:	03,15,17,21,25,28,30
October :	01,09,12
November :	02,06,17,18,23,25
December :	23,24

## APPENDIX B

### CODER INSTRUCTIONS

On the attached sheets of paper you will find a series of assertions drawn from the attached news articles. Your task is to rate the favorableness of the assertions, as they are used in the context of the paragraph. The rating scale is to the right of each assertion. You are to take the following actions,

1. Read the entire article.
2. Read the paragraph in which the assertion you are rating originates.
3. Consider whether the assertion reflects favorably or unfavorably on the image of the Army, Navy, Marines, etc.
4. Consider whether the assertion is essentially neutral.
5. Consider whether the information in the assertion which made you decide if it was favorable or unfavorable was directly stated or if the image you got was inferred from the information.
6. Circle the corresponding rating to the right of the assertion.

Remember to judge the assertion in the context of the paragraph. You are reading the entire article to ensure that you know what is going on in the story. The rating scale is as follows:

1. **HIGHLY UNFAVORABLE** - The assertion directly states a fact or opinion which reflects unfavorably on any aspect of the military, including but not limited to damage, waste, inefficiency, equipment or training failures, crime, lack of security, unnecessary death tolls, ridicule, unfavorable press or public relations, or unfavorable effects of the military presence. Examples follow:

The crash was attributed to equipment failure.

Military overspending contributes to runaway inflation.

Garwood was charged with four counts of treason.

2. UNFAVORABLE - Whether the information contained in the assertion infers a negative or unfavorable image of the military, including but not limited to damage, waste, inefficiency, equipment or training failures, crime, lack of security, unnecessary death tolls, ridicule, unfavorable press or public relations or unfavorable effects of the military presence. Examples follow:

It won't be marching for long if overeating turns the stomach into a potbelly.

Military members are told to make themselves less conspicuous in their appearance and behavior.

The decision to cancel the weapon means the Army will have to go back to the drawing board.

3. NEUTRAL - Statements of fact which are neither favorable or unfavorable to the image of the military. Opinions are assumed to have a favorable or unfavorable slant, so only facts should be rated as neutral. Examples follow:

CPT Jones is the Public Affairs Officer at Camp Smell, Oklahoma.

He was interviewed on the NBC Today Show.

They provide soldiers with 500 to 800 calories per meal.

4. INDIRECTLY FAVORABLE - Whether the information contained in the assertion causes the reader to infer a positive image of the military. Indicators of favorableness would include reference to beautification, positive public relations, successful campaigns, waging war more efficiently than the enemy, physical fitness, improved security, reasonableness and efficiency of operations, awards, superior training or equipment, or activity which benefits the community. Depending on the context, the correction of a problem or deficiency may be considered a positive factor. Examples follow:

It is designed to help soldiers fight the battle of the bulge.

The security tips are described as the common sense variety.

The Army has both a right and a responsibility to guard its ranks.

5. DIRECTLY FAVORABLE - Whether the assertion directly states a fact or opinion which favorably reflects on any aspect of the military, as outlined in #4. Examples below:

Weinberger won wide Congressional praise.

It may be genuinely helpful in organizing our national defense against this social disease.

The Army has programs to rehabilitate alcoholics and drug abusers.

KEEP IN MIND:

1. Many of your ratings will be neutral; don't worry about this.
2. Follow the procedure {6 steps} on page 1 of the instructions for each assertion - it may be helpful.
3. Keep your personal opinion out of this.
4. Death may be a positive or negative rating, according to how it is presented: Killing the enemy in time of war is positive (provided it was done legally). Killing your own troops off through accidents is not. Death will never be neutral.
5. When you can't make up your mind, consider the intent of the author, the tone of the paragraph, to decide between favorable and unfavorable.
6. When you can't make up your mind if its direct or inferred, consider the sentences standing alone. Then break the sentence down to the subject and verbs, adjectives, etc. If you still don't know, it's probably inferred. (Or you're tired and need a break).

If you have questions, call me at (512) 440-8442.

## NOTES

### CHAPTER I

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## CHAPTER III

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#### CHAPTER IV

#### CHAPTER V

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## VITA

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